



Islamic Online University

The Three Shelters

A Commentary on Chapters
112, 113 & 114 of the Qur'aan
[Also Known as the Three Quls]

By

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Module 2

تفسير سورة الإخلاص

Tafseer Soorah al-Ikhlaas

Verse 2



2. “Allaah, the Self-Sufficient.”

In this verse Allaah elaborates on His Uniqueness (*ahadiyyah*) mentioned in the first verse. Here, He uses the term *samad* which means that He is perfect in all of His Attributes and that all creation is in need of Him.¹ Ibn ‘Abbaas was reported to have said that *as-samad* meant, “He is the Master [*as-Sayyid*] who is perfect in His sovereignty, the Most Noble [*ash-Shareef*] who is perfect in His nobility, the Most Magnificent [*al-‘Azeem*] who is perfect in His magnificence, the Most Forbearing [*al-Haleem*] who is perfect in His forbearance, the All-Knowing [*al-‘Aleem*] who is perfect in His knowledge, and the Most Wise [*al-Hakeem*] who is perfect in His wisdom.”²

Allaah’s perfection implies that He is not in need of any of His creation in any way, as nothing they can do can better or benefit His already perfect state. This attribute of *samadiyyah* (self-sufficiency) invites the believers to reflect on the purpose and the goals of their worship. Most people worship as if they are doing God a favor. Allaah scolded those Bedouins who considered their conversion a favor to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ), saying:

﴿يَمُنُونَ عَلَيْكَ أَنْ أَسْلَمُوا قُلْ لَا تَمُنُوا عَلَيَّ إِسْلَمَكُمْ بَلِ اللَّهُ يَمُنْ عَلَيْكُمْ أَنْ هَدَاكُمْ لِلْإِيمَانِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ﴾

“They regard their conversion to Islaam as a favor to you. Tell them: ‘Don’t count your Islaam as a favor to me. Instead, it is Allaah who has granted a favor to you by guiding you to true faith, if you are indeed truthful.’” (*Soorah al-Hujuraat*, 49: 17)

¹ *Tafseer al-Qur’aan al-Kareem*, p. 353.

² *Tafseer at-Tabaree*, vol. 24, p. 692, as quoted in *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol. 10, p. 634.

The purpose of our creation is to worship Allaah. That is crystal clear in the revelation. Our purpose was not left to be deduced or discovered, but was stated in no uncertain terms in the books of revelation. However, it is only in the Qur'aan, the final revelation, that that purpose is spelled out and thereby remained clear over the generations since its revelation. The Almighty said:

﴿ وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ ﴾

“I only created the jinn and humankind to worship Me.” (Soorah *ath-Thaariyaat*, 51: 56)

In case those who heard or read this verse might think that Allaah needs humans or jinns to worship Him, He went on to clarify that He has no need for or from them saying:

﴿ مَا أُرِيدُ مِنْهُمْ مِنْ رِزْقٍ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ يُطْعِمُونِ ﴾

“I do not want any provision from them nor do I wish them to feed Me.” (51: 57)

Human beings and the jinn have nothing they can provide Allaah with. They cannot even provide for themselves or other creatures. Allaah is the Provider, as He went on to say:

﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الرَّزَّاقُ ذُو الْقُوَّةِ الْمَتِينُ ﴾

“Indeed, Allaah is the All-Provider, Owner of Power, and the Most Strong.” (51: 58)

With regard to the animal sacrifices prescribed during Hajj, Allaah clarified His lack of need saying:

﴿ لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهَ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ ﴾

“Neither their meat nor their blood reaches Allaah, but it is your piety that reaches Him.” (Soorah al-Hajj, 22: 37)

Thus, the prescription of worship as the purpose of creation is for human need. However, to understand why human beings need to worship God, one must first understand what is meant by the term ‘worship’. In English the term ‘worship’ comes from the Old English *weorthscipe* meaning ‘honor’. Consequently, worship in the English language is defined as ‘the performance of devotional acts in honor of a deity’.³ In common usage, worship means calling on God for your wants and needs. As such, most people worship God in times of need. However, in the language of the final revelation worship is called ‘*ibaadah*’ which is derived from the noun ‘*abd*’, meaning ‘a slave’. A slave is one who is expected to do whatever his master wills. Consequently, worship according to the final revelation means ‘obedient submission to the Will of God’. This was the essence of the message of all the prophets sent by Allaah to humankind. For example, this understanding of worship was emphatically expressed in a statement attributed to Prophet Jesus in the Gospel according to Matthew, 7:21, “*None of those who call me ‘Lord’ will enter the kingdom of God, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.*” The ‘Will of God’ is contained in the divinely revealed laws which the prophets taught their followers. Consequently, obedience to divine law is the foundation of worship. In this sense, glorification also becomes worship when humans choose to obey God’s instructions regarding His glorification.

The Need for Worship

Why do human beings need to worship and glorify God by obeying the divinely revealed laws? Because obedience to divine law is the key to success in this life and the next. The first human beings, Adam and Eve, were created in paradise and later expelled from paradise for disobeying the divine law. The only way for human beings to return to paradise is by obedience to the law. Jesus, the Messiah, was reported in the Gospel according to Matthew to have made obedience to the divine laws the key to paradise: *Now behold, one came and said to him, “Good teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” So he said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. But if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.”*⁴ Also in Matthew 5:19, Jesus Christ was reported to have insisted on strict obedience to the commandments saying, “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these

³ *The Living Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary*, p.1148.

⁴ Matthew 19:16-17 (R.S.V.).

commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Divine laws represent guidance for humankind in all walks of life. It defines right and wrong for them and offers human beings a complete system governing all of their affairs. The Creator alone knows best what is beneficial for His creation and what is not. Thus, the divine laws command and prohibit various acts and substances to protect the human spirit, the human body and human society from harm. In order for human beings to fulfill their potential by living righteous lives, they need to worship God through obedience to His commandments.

Remembrance of God

All of the various acts of worship contained in the divine laws are designed to help humans remember God. It is natural for human beings to sometimes forget even the most important things. Humans often become so engrossed in fulfilling their material needs that they totally forget their spiritual needs. Regular prayer is ordained to organize the day of the true believer around the remembrance of God. It interweaves spiritual needs with material needs on a daily basis. The regular daily need to eat, work and sleep is linked to the daily need to renew man's connection with God. With regard to regular prayer, Allaah states in the final revelation, chapter *Taahaa*:

{ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي }

“Verily, I am Allaah, there is no god beside Me, so worship Me and establish regular prayer for My remembrance.”(Soorah Taahaa, 20:14)

Regarding fasting, Allaah stated in the chapter *al-Baqarah*:

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ }

“O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you that you may become God-conscious.”
(Soorah *al-Baqarah*, 2:183)

The believers are encouraged to remember God as much as possible. Although, moderation in all spheres of life, whether material or spiritual, is generally encouraged in divine law, an exception is made regarding the remembrance of Allaah. It is virtually impossible to remember God too much. Consequently, in the final revelation, chapter *al-Ahzaab*, Allaah encourages the believers to remember God as often as possible:

{ يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ ذِكْرًا كَثِيرًا }

“O believers! Remember Allaah often.” (Soorah *al-Ahzaab*, 33:41)

Remembrance of God is stressed because sin is generally committed when God is forgotten. The forces of evil operate most freely when consciousness of God is lost. Consequently, the satanic forces seek to occupy people’s minds with irrelevant thoughts and desires to make them forget God. Once God is forgotten, people willingly join the corrupt elements. The final revelation, the Qur’aan, addresses this phenomenon in chapter *al-Mujaadalah* as follows:

{ اِسْتَحْوَذَ عَلَيْهِمُ الشَّيْطَانُ فَأَنسَاهُمْ ذِكْرَ اللَّهِ أُولَئِكَ حِزْبُ الشَّيْطَانِ أَلَا إِنَّ
حِزْبَ الشَّيْطَانِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ }

“Satan has got the better of them and caused them to forget Allaah. Those are the party of Satan. Truly the party of Satan are the real losers.” (Qur’aan, 58:19)

God, through Divine law, has prohibited intoxicants and gambling primarily because they cause human beings to forget God. The human mind and body easily becomes addicted to drugs and games of chance. Once addicted, humankind’s desire to continually be stimulated by them leads them into all forms of corruption and violence among themselves. God says in chapter *al-Maa’idah* of the final revelation:

{ إِنَّمَا يُرِيدُ الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ يُوقَعَ بَيْنَكُمْ الْعَدَاوَةَ وَالْبَغْضَاءَ فِي الْخَمْرِ وَالْمَيْسِرِ
وَيَصُدَّكُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَعَنِ الصَّلَاةِ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُنْتَهُونَ }

“Satan’s plan is to incite enmity and hatred among you with intoxicants and gambling, and hinder you from the remembrance of Allaah and regular prayer. Will you not then abstain?” (Soorah *al-Maa’idah*, 5:91)

Consequently, humankind need to remember God for their own salvation and growth. All humans have times of weakness in which they commit sins. If they have no means of remembering God, they sink deeper and deeper into corruption with every sin. However, those who follow the divine laws will be constantly reminded of God, which will give them a chance to repent and correct themselves. The final revelation accurately describes this process in chapter *Aal 'Imraan* :

{ وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا فَعَلُوا فَاحِشَةً أَوْ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ ذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ فَاسْتَغْفَرُوا لِذُنُوبِهِمْ ... }

“Those who, having done something shameful or having wronged their own souls, *remember Allaah* and immediately ask forgiveness for their sins ...” (Soorah *Aal 'Imraan*, 3:135)

The Religion of Islaam

The most complete system of worship available to human beings today is the system found in the religion of Islaam. The very name ‘Islaam’ means ‘submission to the Will of God’. Although it is commonly referred to as ‘the third of the three monotheistic faiths’, it is not a new religion at all. It is the religion brought by all of the prophets of God for humankind. Islaam was the religion of Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Regarding Prophet Abraham, God addresses this issue in the final revelation saying:

{ مَا كَانَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ يَهُودِيًّا وَلَا نَصْرَانِيًّا وَلَكِنْ كَانَ حَنِيفًا مُسْلِمًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ }

“Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but he was an upright Muslim who did not worship others besides God.” (Soorah *Aal 'Imraan*, 3:67)

Since there is only One God, and humankind are one species, the religion which God has ordained for human beings is one. He did not prescribe one religion for the Jews, another for Indians, yet another for Europeans, etc. Human spiritual and social needs are uniform and human nature has not changed since the first man and woman were created. Consequently, no other religion is acceptable to God besides Islaam, as He clearly states in chapter *Aal 'Imraan* of the final revelation:

{ إِنَّ الدِّينَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الْإِسْلَامُ }

“Surely Allaah’s religion is Islaam.” (Soorah *Aal 'Imraan*, 3:19)

{ وَمَنْ يَبْتَغِ غَيْرَ الْإِسْلَامِ دِينًا فَلَنْ يُقْبَلَ مِنْهُ وَهُوَ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ }

“And whoever desires a religion besides Islaam will not have it accepted, and he will be among the losers in the hereafter.” (Soorah Aal ‘Imraan, 3:85)

Every Act Worship

In the Islaamic system, each and every human act can be transformed into an act of worship. In fact, God commands the believers to dedicate their whole lives to Him. In chapter *al-A‘raaf*, Allaah says:

{ قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ }

“Say: ‘Surely my prayer, my sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allaah, the Lord of all the worlds.’ ” (Soorah Aal ‘Imraan, 7:162)

However, for that dedication to be acceptable to Allaah, each act must fulfill two basic conditions:

1 FIRST, THE ACT MUST BE DONE SINCERELY FOR the pleasure of God and not for the recognition and praise of human beings. The believer also has to be conscious of God while doing the deed to insure that it is not something forbidden by Allaah or the last Messenger (ﷺ).

In order to facilitate this transformation of mundane deeds into worship, Allaah instructed the last Prophet (ﷺ) to prescribe short prayers to be said before even the simplest of acts. The shortest prayer which may be used for any circumstance is: **بِسْمِ اللَّهِ** *bismillaah* (In the name of Allaah). There are, however, many other prayers prescribed for specific occasions. For example, whenever a new piece of clothing is worn, the Prophet (ﷺ) taught his followers to say:

اللَّهُمَّ لَكَ الْحَمْدُ أَنْتَ كَسَوْتَنِيهِ، أَسْأَلُكَ مِنْ خَيْرِهِ وَخَيْرِ مَا صَنَعَ لَهُ، وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ شَرِّهِ وَشَرِّ مَا صَنَعَ لَهُ .

*O Allaah, thanks is due to You, for it is You who has clothed me. I ask You for its benefit and the benefit for which it was made, and seek refuge in You from its evil and the evil for which it was made.*⁵

2 THE SECOND CONDITION IS THAT THE ACT BE done in accordance with the prophetic way, called in Arabic the *sunnah*. All of the prophets instructed their followers to follow their way because they were guided by God. What they taught were divinely revealed truths and only those who followed their way and accepted the truths would inherit eternal life in paradise. It is in this context that Prophet Jesus, may the peace and blessings of God be upon him, was reported in the Gospel according to John 14:6, as saying, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*” Similarly, ‘Abdullaah ibn Mas‘ood related that one day Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) drew a line in the dust for them and said, “*This is Allaah’s path.*” He then drew several lines [branching off] to the right and to the left and said, “*These are the paths [of misguidance] on each of which is a devil inviting people to follow it.*” He then recited the verse: “**Verily, this is my path, leading straight, so follow it. And do not follow the [other] paths for they will scatter you about from Allaah’s path. That is His command to you in order that you may be conscious of Allaah.**”^{6,7} Thus, the only acceptable way to worship God is according to the way of the prophets. That being the case, innovation in religious affairs would be considered by God among the worst of all evils. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) was reported to have said, “*The worst of all affairs is innovation in religion, for every religious innovation is a cursed, misleading innovation leading to the hellfire.*”⁸ Innovation in the religion is forbidden and unacceptable to God. The Prophet (ﷺ) was also reported by his wife, ‘Aa’ishah, to have said, “*He who innovates something in this matter of ours, that is not of it, will have it rejected.*”⁹

It is fundamentally due to innovations that the messages of the earlier prophets were distorted and the many false religions around today evolved. The general rule to follow in order to avoid innovation in religion is that all forms of worship are prohibited, except those which have been specifically prescribed by God and conveyed to humans by the true messengers of God.

⁵ *Sunan Abu Dawud*, vol.3, p.1125, no.4009 and authenticated in *Saheeh Sunan Abee Daawood*, vol.2, p.760, no.3393.

⁶ Soorah *al-An‘aam* (6):153.

⁷ Collected by Ahmad, an-Nasaa’ee and ad-Daarimee, and authenticated by Ahmad Shaakir in *al-Musnad*, vol.6, pp.89-90, no.4142.

⁸ *Saheeh Muslim*, vol.2, p.410, no.1885.

⁹ *Saheeh Al-Bukhari*, vol.3, pp.535-6, no.861 and *Saheeh Muslim*, vol.3, p.931, no.4266.